

stereotyped set of formulas, whether of Marx or any other, and that it has shown a tendency to degenerate into a stiff orthodoxy, which seeks to apply narrow and half-digested theories, without adapting or even reasonably understanding them, to circumstances for which they are not suited.

Whatever claims socialism makes to represent the aspirations after a better life of the toiling and suffering millions of the human race are well sustained in this new edition of Mr. Kirkup's scholarly and practical work.

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The Story of France, from the Earliest Times to the Consulate of Napoleon Bonaparte. By THOMAS E. WATSON. Two vols., pp. xv, 712; x, 1,076. Price, \$5.00. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899.

Mr. Watson, in his preface, lets us into the secret of his preference for French history. France is a type of what humanity has done and suffered. She has sounded all depths, has boxed the compass of political and social experiment. Nowhere else have changes been "more frequent, more radical, more sudden, bloody and dramatic." Of good she has possessed the best, of ill the vilest. Such an embarrassment of riches might discourage a fainter heart, but Mr. Watson advances to the task without misgivings.

It may be questioned, however, whether the author's preparation for the task has been of the kind which modern historical writing exacts. The work gives little evidence of ripe scholarship or of that careful scrutiny of conflicting accounts which is necessary for the elaboration of a judgment worth recording. There are long stretches of narrative that might have been adapted from the book nearest at hand, with just a dash of lurid eloquence to change its flavor. Throughout the whole the author's individuality is expressed rather in eccentricities of style than in the substantial results of wide reading and deep reflection.

Such is the impression received from reading the first volume at the time of its appearance. The second volume was looked forward to with interest. From what was known of the author's personality, it was felt by many that here would be found the justification for the work; that the first volume, in spite of its seven hundred pages, was little more than a running start; that in the treatment of the Revolution, with its wealth of economic and social suggestion, the author might find his opportunity.

But expectation of this sort was wasted. The second volume, to be sure, is better done. It shows more thought, more reading; but its

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treatment of the facts is the conventional one. It has no point of view. Robespierre is toned a little. In this the author has picked up a thread of modern tendency; but this is all. The associates of Robespierre are the same old band of battered villains; and Vadier, who has already suffered enough on paper to earn him paradise, gets a thwack, *en passant*, as "perhaps the most venomous moccasin to be found in the whole Convention," not a small distinction, as the rest of them are fitted out.

Mr. Watson's sins, however, are not alone sins of omission. Whatever be its purpose or the place which the work is intended to fill, the method of its presentation is in flagrant disregard of much that modern historical writing seeks to accomplish. In his struggle for the dramatic, Mr. Watson loses his sense of realism. He burns his red lights in every scene. His pictures are of times that never were by land or sea. His villains are black as night, his saints are spotless. He has no greys and browns. In the times of which he writes almost any occurrence was sufficient, it seems, to stir the volatile French nature to its depths. It is rather the rule than the exception that "terror, confusion, boundless wrath seized the people and delirium raged for hours." At frequent intervals France is devastated. After a few years of an expensive and licentious sovereign the country is as bare as if twin cyclones had promenaded through the land; but fortunately for the reader, who is looking forward to a century or two of absolute want, the scenes are reset in the following chapter and the new king finds as fair a field as ever for his exploitation.

Mr. Watson's style has been variously described as vivid, dramatic, clear, crisp and witty. It is all of these, and more. His method of presentation is said to resemble that of Guizot; but, as a matter of fact, the author of "The Story of France" has been most influenced by Carlyle. There is but one Carlyle in the writing of French history, and the demand is more than satisfied. But of all literary men who have found history a good subject for the exercise of their art, Carlyle is surely the most dangerous to follow.

Mr. Watson's work may find a public, for it is readable; but it has serious faults and no instructor who is in sympathy with recent ideals in historical writing is likely to recommend it to his classes. The appearance of the work, however, has proved an event of interest in the history of publication. It has caused much discussion and has had the effect of reconstructing opinions formerly entertained as to the value and reality of the preliminary processes which a manuscript is supposed to undergo, previous to its acceptance at the hands of a discriminating publisher.

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